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THE U.S. ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST DEBATE

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE AMERICAN ROLE IN THE U.N. MIDDLE EAST DEBATE WHICH BEGAN MONDAY:

VOICE:

THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION ABOUT THE AMERICAN POSITION IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S MIDDLE EAST DEBATE---AND NOT ALL OF IT IS ACCURATE BY ANY MEANS. FOR THIS REASON, OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON HAVE BEEN AT SOME PAINS TO MAKE CLEAR THE GENERAL OUTLINES OF THAT POSITION.

THE UNITED STATES IS, OF COURSE, FAR FROM ETHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE SECURITY COUNCIL AS THE APPROPRIATE SITE FOR MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS---AND WHILE WASHINGTON DOES NOT OBJECT TO A USEFUL DEBATE, IT DOES NOT SEE THE UNITED NATIONS AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR BI-LATERAL AND MULTI-LATERAL DISCUSSIONS AMONG THE CONCERNED PARTIES.

FURTHERMORE, THE UNITED STATES IS OPPOSED TO ANY EFFORTS TO CHANGE THE FRAMEWORK OF NEGOTIATIONS---SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS TWO HUNDRED FORTY-TWO AND THREE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT. ADMITTEDLY, THERE IS DISAGREEMENT ABOUT THE INTERPRETATION OF THESE RESOLUTIONS. BUT THEY HAVE BEEN FOR YEARS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED, AND THE FEELING HERE IS THAT THEY REMAIN THE MOST REALISTIC BASIS FOR AN EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. IF THIS ACCEPTED NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK IS NOW CHANGED SUBSTANTIVELY, THEN---AS ONE AMERICAN OFFICIAL PUT IT LAST WEEK--- YOU OPEN A "PANDORA'S BOX."

AND, FINALLY, THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT FAVOR THE INCLUSION OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION IN THE SECURITY

COUNCIL DEBATE---UNLESS IT ACCEPTS THE PERTINENT RESOLUTIONS I HAVE JUST MENTIONED, AND RECOGNIZES THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL. HOWEVER, THIS IS A PROCEDURAL MATTER, AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL---AS THE SAME AMERICAN OFFICIAL PUT IT---"IS THE MASTER OF ITS OWN PROCEDURES." NO MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL HAS A VETO POWER IN THIS MATTER.

IT SHOULD ALSO BE BORNE IN MIND, HOWEVER, IN ANALYSING THE AMERICAN POSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST DEBATE, THAT WASHINGTON IS BY NO MEANS WRITING OFF THE DEBATE AS A USELESS EXERCISE. IF IT TAKES PLACE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF INTELLIGENCE AND MODERATION, AND AVOIDS ATTEMPTING TO COMMIT THE COUNCIL TO EXTREME POSITIONS, IT CAN BE QUITE USEFUL. FURTHERMORE, THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO RESOLUTIONS TWO-FORTY-TWO AND THREE-THIRTY-EIGHT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE UNITED STATES IS RIGIDLY OPPOSED TO ANY ADDITIONAL MOVES WHICH COULD IMPROVE THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE. AND WHILE WASHINGTON HAS EXPRESSED ITS OPPOSITION TO P.L.O. PARTICIPATION UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE AND THE NEED TO INSURE THE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

IN SHORT, THE PRIMARY AIM OF THE UNITED STATES IN THIS DEBATE----AS THESE OFFICIALS PUT IT---IS TO IMPROVE THE PROSPECTS FOR A JUST AND PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE. IN THE DEBATE, THEY INSIST, NOTHING SHOULD BE DONE WHICH WOULD SET BACK THE CHANCES FOR SUCH A SETTLEMENT. AND---BY THE SAME TOKEN---ALL THOSE PARTICIPATING SHOULD REMAIN OPEN TO ANY INITIATIVE THAT WOULD HELP PROMOTE A SETTLEMENT. FOR IT IS ONLY BY ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE CAUSE OF PEACE---NOT

BY THE POINTS SCORED BY ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER---THAT THE WISDOM AND USEFULNESS OF THIS DEBATE CAN BE MEASURED.

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